

Lesson
5

Problem Subjects

Teaching

The following guidelines can help you decide whether the subject in a sentence is singular or plural.

Collective Nouns A collective noun names a group of people or things. Examples include *group*, *team*, *family*, *class*, and *majority*. When the members act together, the collective noun takes a singular verb. When they act as individuals, it takes a plural verb.

Next week, the club publishes its final report to the school. (acting together)

The club are completing their research projects. (acting as individuals)

Nouns Plural in Form Some nouns ending in *-s* or *-ics* appear to be plural but are considered singular. As subjects, these nouns take singular verbs. Examples include *news*, *measles*, *mathematics*, *mumps*, *civics*, *physics*, *acoustics*, and *molasses*.

Mathematics has many fields of study, including geometry and algebra.

Titles Titles of works of art, literature, or music are singular.

The Frogs is a play usually presented in swimming pools.

Measures and Amounts Words and phrases that identify weights, measures, numbers, and time are usually considered singular. Fractions are considered singular or plural depending on whether the subject is thought of as a whole or as separate objects.

Two ounces of the spice costs more than I want to spend. (singular)

Four hours is required for developing the film. (singular)

Only two-fifths of the packages have been delivered. (plural)

Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects

In each sentence, underline the subject and the form of the verb that agrees with it.

1. The lacrosse team (has, have) won the championship.
2. The parents' committee (has, have) been unable to agree on award winners.
3. *The Fantasticks* (is, are) the play that the drama club is performing.
4. Three dollars (are, is) the price of a raffle ticket.
5. A majority (have, has) voted for Benjamin, who is now the school president.
6. The honors club (is, are) offering free tutoring to the students.
7. Five inches of snow (are, is) enough for the school to close for the day.
8. Acoustics (are, is) the study of sound.
9. "Four days (are, is) plenty of warning for a test," replied the teacher.
10. Two-thirds of the students (is, are) part of an athletic team.
11. Thirty dollars (is, are) the price for the team sweatshirt.
12. "Two-fourths of any amount (equal, equals) one-half of it," answered the student.
13. The art class (meets, meet) only once a week.
14. *Around the World in 80 Days* (is, are) the book that the literature class is reading.
15. Economics (is, are) not a popular class for many high school students.

Problem Subjects

More Practice

A. Using Verbs That Agree with Problem Subjects

In each sentence, underline the verb that agrees in number with the subject.

1. One-half of the students (are, is) participating in extracurricular activities.
2. Physics (is, are) offered only to high school juniors and seniors.
3. Three dollars (has, have) for years been the price for a school lunch.
4. The soccer team (practices, practice) every other day.
5. *The Planets* (are, is) the first work on today's orchestra program.
6. The group (argue, argues) about extending the school day.
7. Six years (was, were) a long time to wait for a championship title.
8. Three-fourths of our time (was, were) spent in choosing a name for the yearbook.
9. Athletics (is, are) an important part of the extracurricular activities at the school.
10. The troop (meet, meets) every Tuesday night to discuss upcoming events.

B. Correcting Subject-Verb Agreement

If the verb agrees with its subject, write **Correct** on the line. If it disagrees, write the correct form of the verb.

1. The war news were not good. _____
2. The hard-working staff deserves their days off. _____
3. *Circular Forms* was painted by Robert Delaunay. _____
4. The jury has delivered its opinion. _____
5. Slightly over 26 miles are run by every successful marathon runner. _____
6. Economics deals with the production and use of goods and services. _____
7. Two-thirds of the milk were spoiled by morning. _____
8. One-half of the marbles have fallen off the table. _____
9. The class have voted unanimously for Cheryl. _____
10. "We Three Kings" are a traditional holiday carol. _____

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Proofread this paragraph for errors in subject-verb agreement. Draw a line through each incorrect verb. Then draw this proofreading symbol ↯ next to the word and write the correction above the error.

The school orchestra are holding a performance this week at the local music center. Five dollars are the price of the tickets for students, and seven dollars are the price for nonstudents. We are hoping that a large audience turn out for the show. The orchestra is performing a variety of songs. *The Pines of Rome* are to be played, for example. The audience are going to be encouraged to sing along with popular songs on the program. Two-thirds of the profit from the performance are to be spent on new sheet music.

B. Writing Sentences

Complete each of these sentences by adding a verb in the present or present progressive tense that agrees with the subject and any other needed words.

EXAMPLE Three-fourths of the pudding *has been eaten already*.

1. The debate club _____

2. Two-fifths of these magazines _____

3. "The Three Little Pigs" _____

4. Six pounds _____

5. Mathematics _____
